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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9379
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RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2242
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5706
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9308
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6889
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 2300
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2680
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000548

SIPDIS

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PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: SENATOR WEBB'S MEETING WITH NATIONAL UNITY
PARTY LEADERS

REF: RANGOON 543

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Classified By: P/E Chief Jennifer Harhigh for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

1. (C) During a brief August 15 meeting arranged by the
GOB, National Unity Party (NUP) leader Khin Maung Gyi told
Senator Webb Burma needs to follow its own path to establish
democracy, with a priority on maintaining national solidarity
in the face of ethnic diversity. He stated that Burma needs
U.S. presence in the region and expressed dissatisfaction
with the 1990 election results because they did not reflect
the actual popularity of the NUP. The well-spoken Khin Maung
Gyi, a former Minister of Trade during the Burma Socialist
Program Party (BSPP) era, was clearly well-briefed on the
Senator's background, and used the meeting to present the
current regime's political arguments. End summary.

2. (C) Senator Webb met for 20 minutes with NUP leaders,
including Joint General Secretary Khin Maung Gyi and Central
Executive Committee Members Thein Tun, Han Shwe, Tun Yi and
Pe Lain Maung, after his group meeting with political parties
and a separate private session with the National League for
Democracy (Reftel). All the NUP leaders present were former
members of the BSPP. (Note: The NUP, which claims 750,000
members, generally supports regime policies and has pledged
to field candidates for the 2010 elections in all states and
divisions. End note.)

NUP on Democracy: Let us do it "Our Way"

3. (C) Khin Maung Gyi, who visited Washington in the 1980s
in his capacity as Minister of Trade and met with the
Secretary of Agriculture, told Senator Webb his party wants
to reestablish ties with the U.S. but also wants to clear up
misperceptions. Dialogue and reconciliation are needed in
Burma, but all parties need to learn lessons from past
events. Noting that Burma has over 135 ethnic minorities,
Khin Maung Gyi stressed the importance of consolidating
national solidarity, and said harmony is in the interest of

all. He added that Burma does not want the same fate as Georgia, with its ethnic conflicts. In the NUP's opinion, the regime's May 2008 constitutional referendum had been "vigorously contested" and should not be revisited as some parties have urged, because it would cause confusion. Quoting Frank Sinatra, Khin Maung Gyi told the Senator "let us do it (democracy) our way."

Views on China, U.S. Presence in Southeast Asia

¶4. (C) Khin Maung Gyi told Senator Webb he can serve as a "good bridge" between Burma and the United States. He described Senator Webb's position on China as "congaement," seeking to contain China's influence while also engaging with the country. Khin Maung Gyi said he recognizes a need for U.S. presence in Southeast Asia. Burma is seeking to maintain its neutrality as it is located between China and India and thus is reaching out to the U.S. In response, Senator Webb clarified that the U.S. is not seeking to "contain" China, but rather wants a balance in the region. He added that Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries recognize the need for such a balance; it is an advantage to have a neutral, large ally in the region. The U.S. values being an "Asian nation," the Senator stated. Sanctions policy, by enabling China to expand influence in Burma, had removed the balance.

NUP: Unhappy with 1990 Results

¶5. (C) Turning to Burma's domestic politics, Senator Webb asked for the NUP's position on the National League for Democracy's (NLD) view that the 1990 elections should be

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honored. Khin Maung Gyi acknowledged the NLD won a majority of seats in 1990, but lamented that the "first past the post" system gave the NLD a higher percentage of seats than votes. The NUP, despite garnering 3.3 million votes, had secured only 12 seats, while the NLD, with 7.8 million votes, had won many more seats. Khin Maung Gyi noted there had been fraud complaints in 1990 and added he hoped for a revised electoral system in the future. (Note: Embassy records list NLD with 7.9 million votes and 392 seats; NUP with 2.9 million votes and 10 seats. End note.) Senator Webb concluded the meeting by noting that Burma and the U.S. have a lot in common if obstacles can be overcome.

Comment

¶6. (C) Khin Maung Gyi, who did all of the talking for the NUP, was well-prepared for the meeting with Senator Webb. His eloquent presentation in perfect English was clearly an effort to appear reasonable in justifying the GOB's "roadmap to democracy." In both substance and style, Khin Maung Gyi came across as the polar opposite of NLD CEC member Nyunt Wai, who was at times disorganized and cantankerous in addressing the Senator. As with many aspects of the visit, the regime controlled Webb's interactions with political parties and the difference in appearances between the NUP and NLD was no accident. It was clear Khin Maung Gyi had been prepped and was familiar with the Senator's views on sanctions and China's influence in the region. In contrast, as Nyunt Wai vocally complained during the group session, the NLD received little advance notice and no information on the "VIP" they would meet in Nay Pyi Taw.

¶7. (SBU) Codel Webb declined the opportunity to clear on this message.
VAJDA